

Addressing Regional Accreditation Requirements for Outcomes Assessment

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Assessment**

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Good assessment processes

- **Are used**
- **Are valued**
- **Yield reasonably truthful and accurate results**
- **Are cost-effective**
- **Focus on and flow from clear and important goals**

From Suskie (2006) -- see *Resources & References*

HLC:

Good assessment processes should:

- **Indicate how well student learning goals are being achieved**
- **Help strengthen and improve student learning**
- **Be credible enough to influence curricula, learning environments, budgeting and planning.**
- **Be ongoing, rather than something to prepare for an accreditation visit.**

**Adapted from: HLC Handbook of Accreditation,
Criterion Three -- see *Resources & References***

Accreditation teams find that institutions have problems with:

- **Articulating goals and measurable objectives**
- **Developing appropriate measures**
- **Collecting and interpreting data**
- **Funding assessment activities**
- **Disseminating results to those who'll use them**
- **Involving faculty in assessment**
- **Collaboration between administrators and faculty**
- **Linking assessment with planning and budgeting**

Adapted from Lopez (1999) -- see *Resources & References*

Using results for program planning & improvement

Doesn't always mean that change is necessary

- **Some things are OK**
 - **How do the results show that?**
 - **What did you do?**
 - **Didn't change anything**
 - **Added further support**
- **Some things need attention**
 - **How do the results show that?**
 - **What did you do?**
 - **Changes made, results so far**
 - **Changes planned**

Using results for program planning & improvement

How do results from student learning outcomes assessment:

- **Lead to or support plans & budget requests?**
- **Support / modify / complement other information?**

Contrast this with “compliance”-type reporting

You interfere with *use* when...

- **Assessment processes don't fit the unit's discipline / style**
- **Assessment results disappear into “the black hole”**

This leads to “compliance” instead of evidence-based decision-making

Can we use what's already in place?

- **Much is already in place - e.g.:**
 - **Grades**
 - **Capstone projects**
 - **Student self-ratings & opinions**
 - **Enrollment flow**
 - **Alumni employment/education**
- **Already familiar, part of unit's process – *but***
 - **May need to be tweaked/modified for effective planning information**

Tweaking what's already in place

- **Clarifying grades**
- **Re-evaluating existing work: samples, portfolios**
- **Evaluating thesis/dissertation presentations**
- **Do standardized exams/surveys fit the unit's goals/approach?**

Managing the process

- **Be careful what messages you send**
 - **Counterproductive: “Outcomes assessment is special and different”**
 - **More effective: “It's part of our general climate of evidence-based decision-making”**
- **Identify/develop local leaders with expertise and clout**
- **Reward good process, not “acceptable numbers”**
 - **Process *includes* using results for program planning & improvement**

Takeaways

- **Good assessment is about gathering information for planning decisions**
- **It won't be used if faculty don't think its credible**
- **It's less credible when administrators don't use it**
- **Support and feedback are important**
- **Pay attention to the messages you send**

Finishing up

The handout is online at

[http://higheredassessment.com/presentations/
BlackboardBallState06.pdf](http://higheredassessment.com/presentations/BlackboardBallState06.pdf)

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